HSE/NCCP confirms cancer drug Ipilumumab to be made available for eligible patients

The HSE/NCCP [National Cancer Control Programme] are pleased to announce that Ipilumumab, the new drug for patients with progressive melanoma will now be made available. The decision is the culmination of a comprehensive Technology Review process within the NCCP which included the drug company submission, a clinical practice guideline from Irish Medical Oncologists and a pharmoeconomic analysis by the National Centre for Pharmoeconomics.

Negotiations regarding optimal pricing commenced in November 2011 and were recently satisfactorily concluded. The participation of Bristol Myers Squibb, the pharmaceutical company, is appreciated

Ipilumumab has been demonstrated to improve survival for patients with advanced disease and although the overall impact on median survival for the entire group is modest, extended from nine to eleven point two months in first line treatment and from six months to ten months in second line treatment, the major benefit of the drug is that a minority of patients will have a sustained improvement in control of their cancer and in survival. For example: 45% of patients receiving Ipilumumab are alive at two years compared to 25% in the control arm of the second line study.

In the first line study 28% of patients on a combination of Ipilumamab and DTIC chemotherapy were alive at two years compared to 18% in the control arm of the study.

Internationally this drug is recognised as a significant advance in the treatment of melanoma.

It is anticipated that 60 patients will be eligible for treatment in 2012.

Further information for treating professionals and hospitals will be forthcoming over the coming days.